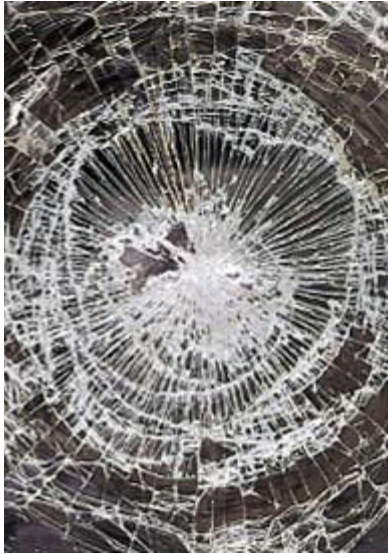


Tuesday, February 10, 2009

Back by semi-popular demand: The Window War



Folks,

I have received an email or three about The Window War so I thought I would bring it back here for a return engagement. I originally wrote this in either late 1999 or early 2000 because the GOP was waffling (don't they always) on more gun control, Dubya was signing on to an AWB and he looked like he was going to be the nominee. Because your freedom of speech about presidential candidates is always filtered through the Secret Service spyglass, I wrote this fiction piece instead. It probably worked out better in the end.

Mike
III

The Window War

by Mike Vanderboegh

Author's Note: The events related in this story are true. It is set in the real town of Hobbs, New Mexico, although some names have been changed to protect the guilty. It begins early in the morning, the day after tomorrow.

"And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had...and his sling was in his hand; and he drew near to the Philistines."-- 1 Samuel 17:40.

"We Americans have set dangerous precedents. We can rest assured that those pushing for gun control have no intention of stopping short of total gun confiscation. At some point, we who cherish liberty must summon the courage of our forefathers and tell America's tyrants, 'Give me liberty, or give me death!' The longer we wait, the greater the ultimate bloodshed." -- Walter E. Williams, Professor of Economics, George Mason University.

Bob Stone stared at the ceiling in the darkness, the popcorn surface barely discernible in the soft glow of the porch light filtering through the bedroom curtains. He had come home angry-- just about as angry as he'd ever been-- and he knew that sleep would not come with his mind still clicking along at about ninety miles an hour. Better to try to walk it off, he thought, since I can't shoot anybody over it. At least not yet.

As he gently rose from the bed, his wife stirred. He froze, and soon her breathing resumed its regular pattern. No need to disturb her anymore than he already had tonight. The meeting had been stormy and had run on into the late evening. Afterwards, he and his friends had refought the arguments for almost an hour. And yet, when he got home, his wife was waiting up (the kids had long ago been put to bed for it was a school night). Amy was anxious to hear what had happened with the Congressman. Bob told her in clipped, furious sentences and her anger rose to meet his with the re-telling. A half-hour later they had turned in, but Bob was too tired and angry to sleep. As Bob collected his pants and shirt from the chair, the clock clicked over to 1:47.

Ten minutes later, he was walking toward downtown in the New Mexico spring night. It was chilly, as it usually is when the sun goes down in the desert, and he was wearing his work jacket. Like most folks in Hobbs, Bob made his money working in the "oil patch". Times had been pretty thin for a while, but now that the price of oil was up thanks to OPEC, things were picking up in the oil and gas business all over the Southwest. It wasn't anyone messing with his money that made Bob Stone mad this night. It was someone messing with his God-given liberty.

They were being sold out. That was the long and short of it. Oh, the Congressman put on a long face, and swore it wasn't any of HIS doing, but they were being sold out, no doubt about it. The Republicans had come up with their own gun control bill, trying to protect their left flank against Clinton-Gore in the upcoming Presidential race. From now on (and for the first time in American history), law-abiding private citizens were going to have to ask the federal government's permission to sell a firearm to another law-abiding private citizen. Not even King George the Third had been so grasping. In addition, there would be no more "high-capacity" rifle or pistol magazines imported. ("High-capacity" meant greater than ten rounds.) Domestic production had already been forbidden in the so-called "assault weapons ban." George "Dubya", the Congressman said, insisted upon it, and the Republican majority leaders in Congress were going to go along. The latest shooting of children by other children (read: "gang members") at the national Zoo in Washington, D.C. hadn't helped.

"But don't they realize that D.C. has the strictest gun control laws in the country?" someone behind Bob had shouted. "How will passing one more law help that?" It wasn't about reality, the Congressman sighed, it was about perceptions. And he didn't have to add that the antigun liberal media had the corner on perception-making.

Bob had listened quietly for over two hours. He'd had enough and now rose to his feet. "But WE put you Republican jerks in power!" he half-shouted. "WE made you a majority party in '94 because you told us you'd try to roll back the Clinton gun-control agenda. Even Clinton blamed the Brady and so-called "Assault Weapons Ban" laws for the Democrat's loss in '94. It was gunowners who put you in power, and kept you in power these past six years, and now you're selling us out! Why don't you look up how much money Lea County gunowners gave you and your Republican brothers over the past six years?"

The Congressman opened his mouth to reply, but Bob cut him off in a low, determined tone: "But I'll tell you one thing, Mr. Republican Congressman, you'll never get another stinking dime out of me or my friends! We won't pay you for the privilege of pissing on our backs and telling us it's raining!" The room erupted into loud clapping and cheers.

Almost drowned out in the din, the Congressman cried: "But it's not MY fault!".

"Whose is it then?" three or four people shot back at him, almost in unison.

The Congressman had the look of a deer in the headlights of an oncoming truck. He had come here prepared to talk about Social Security, but nearly every question had been about gun control. Reaching for an answer that wouldn't be a mistake in front of this hostile crowd, he came up with: "The Columbine killers. Everything changed after Columbine." Wrong answer.

The room erupted. Someone threw an empty coffee cup that landed well short of the Congressman. Bob was back up on his feet, shouting full-throat this time: "That's a load of crap and you know it! When your Republican bosses in the House came to you with this treason, did you tell them that passing it would violate your oath to uphold the Constitution and that you would be forced to resign from their party if they

went ahead with it?!? Well, did you?!?"

The shouted question cut through the air and the crowd quieted, wanting to hear the answer. The Congressman was silent, looking down at the empty coffee cup on the floor.

Bob repeated the challenge: "Well, did you?"

The Congressman stirred from his appreciation of the trash on the floor to ask, "Did I what?"

"I think you heard me the first time, Congressman, but I'll repeat it so we can get an answer: When the House Republican leadership told you they intended to pass this treasonable bill, did you tell them that it would violate your oath to 'preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States' and that you would be forced to resign from their party if they went ahead with it?"

The Congressman hesitated, then answered: "Well, uh, no. Look, if I resigned my seat every time a vote didn't go my way..."

Bob cut him off: "I didn't say 'resign your seat', Congressman. I said, 'resign the party'. The people of this district sent you up there. You took an oath to uphold the Constitution. Your party is about to assist in the destruction of one important part of that Constitution. If you resign out of principle and become an Independent, I feel sure that the people of this district will return to your office when it comes time for re-election. So let me re-phrase the question: When you go back to Washington, will you seek out the House leadership and tell them that if they pass this bill, you intend to resign their party and become an independent because you refuse to be a party to treason?"

The Congressman's aide crossed over and, shielding the microphone, whispered something in the Congressman's ear. The Congressman nodded. The aide returned to the sidelines as Hobbs police officers began to filter into the room from the side and rear doors. The aide had summoned them on his portable phone the moment the coffee cup was thrown.

The Congressman leaned into the microphone, "Well, I'll have to think about it."

Bob wouldn't let it go. "What's to think about?" he shot back. "Either you have principles or you don't. If you don't, have the guts to say so now."

The Congressman shook his head. "I said I'll have to think about it. What you're asking is pretty extreme..."

"Extreme?!?" Bob countered. "Extreme?!?. Congressman, you ain't even close to seein' 'extreme' yet. Don't you realize that if you don't find the guts to stop these treasonable SOBs in Congress, and that if the judiciary doesn't have the guts to stop them in the courts, that someday soon gun-owners like the ones in this room are going to have to stop them in the streets with rifles in our hands? Congressman, you'd better pray you never see 'extreme', for if you do it'll take more than all the cops in Hobbs to protect you from the widows and orphans of the men who will die fighting to preserve the God-given liberty you didn't have the guts to risk your precious political career for!"

The room erupted once again, the cops moved to the front, and the Congressman departed out a side door, almost as fast as it takes to tell. And now, four hours later, Bob was still furious.

They don't roll up the sidewalks at sundown in Hobbs, but the streets were fairly deserted this time of night, or morning actually. Even the cops who usually patrolled every twenty minutes or so in the business district Bob was walking through were busy on drunk and disorderly patrol over on Del Paso or out on Bender Street (no pun intended). The bars close in New Mexico at 2:00 A.M. by state law, so between 2 and 3 is often the night shift patrolman's busiest time. As it turned out, that was a good thing for Bob.

To be truthful about it, Bob was still so mad he wasn't paying a whole lot of attention where he was walking. Later, he would attribute his arrival at the scene of the crime to either his subconscious mind or the hand of God. But all of sudden, without knowing why, he stopped and looked up from his thoughts. And there, smack in front of him, was 509 East Broadway. Now as it happens, 509 East Broadway, Hobbs, New

Mexico, is a modest, well-kept building with sort-of old-fashioned windows flanking the entrance. It also happens to be the headquarters of the Lea County Republican Party.

Now Bob Stone was a church-going, law-abiding fellow. Oh, he'd done his share of tearing around violating traffic laws when he was young and stupid, but never anything serious. A Lea County boy born and bred, the only time he'd seen the inside of the local jail was when he'd bailed out Manny, his buddy from the gas plant, when Manny had been busted for driving drunk on Bender Street at 2:10 in the morning. But as Bob Stone looked up at the sign proclaiming 509 East Broadway as the Headquarters of the Republican Party of Lea County, New Mexico, a snatch of conversation from earlier in the evening (yesterday?) came back to him like divine inspiration.

Bill Dodd, a hunting buddy of Bob's, was a bit of a history buff. They had been standing around after the meeting, trying to answer the question: "What do we do now?"

"Well, ah don't know about y'all," (Bill was originally from Alabama) "but when the Sons of Liberty wanted to make a point back durin' the Revolution they'd get a bunch o' folks together and go pay the local Tories a call. Usually they'd just bust their windows (Bill pronounced it 'winders') with rocks and tell 'em the next time it'd go harder with 'em. The Tories usually got the message and moved away or shut up about likin' the King. Glass bein' so expensive back then and Tories bein' mostly rich folk, it seemed the natch-rel thing for the Sons to do. An' it worked. Maybe we ought-ter do the same thing to these gun-control puke-politicians."

They all had laughed, and the conversation moved on, but Bill Dodd's words now came back to Bob loud and clear. He looked at the windows, he looked at the sign, and he looked up and down the street. Nobody. Nothing but the street lights going through their paces for traffic that wasn't there. But what to use for a rock?

The streets of Hobbs, New Mexico, are pretty well kept. On any other night, the plan that was forming in Bob Stone's angry mind would have failed for lack of ammunition. But as it so happened (and later Bob ascribed it to none other than divine intervention) there at the curbside was a piece of broken concrete which had dropped off the back of a demolition company's truck about ten o'clock the previous morning. Somebody, Bob decided, wants me to do this.

Bob Stone picked up the chunk of concrete. Smooth on one side, it had been part of the parking lot of an old greasy spoon south of town that had been demolished to make way for a new BP super-station. He hefted the chunk. Yep, he decided, just about right.

Even so, Bob hesitated. He wasn't a vandal by training or inclination, and if a car had come by just then, even as angry as he was, he'd have given the whole thing up. But in hesitating, another thought came to him: How would anyone know WHY he had thrown the stone through the Republicans' window? If he intended to make a political statement, the rock would have to be accompanied by a message lest the act be dismissed as ordinary juvenile hi-jinks. His hands went to his jacket pockets, finding (and instantly rejecting) his note pad. First of all, it had his company logo on each sheet (now wouldn't that be bright?), and secondly, he had no way of attaching it to the chunk of concrete. Tape and rubber bands were not items he routinely carried. But when his right hand found the felt-tip marker he always carried in his left breast pocket, he knew that the missile would be the message.

Moving a few steps to take advantage of the street light, Bob rotated the chunk so its flat side was up, and wrote across the top of the flat, "Second Amend." (he ran out of room). So he wrote underneath the first line in smaller letters: "Shall Not Be Infringed." He re-capped the marker, and placed the pen back in his jacket pocket.

His resolve had returned. He was going to do it now, even if a car came by. Even if a cop came by. He was going to send the Republicans an old-fashioned Sons-of-Liberty message. He didn't even check again to see if the street was clear, though it was. He positioned himself at what he judged was the proper distance and heaved the concrete telegram as hard as he could. With what seemed to him to be an atomic crash, the chunk sailed through the window easily. No alarm went off. Hobbs wasn't that kind of town. But Bob Stone began to run away.

He ran west down East Broadway, passing the Martin Boot Company, then crossing over to the other side of the street. He kept on running-- laughing, scared, and immensely proud of himself. He ran until he was winded, past where East Broadway turns into West Broadway. A thought occurred to him then that it was probably a stupid thing to be running down the streets of Hobbs at just past two in the morning. If anybody did drive by they'd rightfully conclude he'd been up to no good. And he didn't have the right shoes on to be able to convince a curious cop he'd been out jogging.

So when he caught his breath, he began to walk west on West Broadway at a normal pace. He passed Desert Guns, his favorite local gunstore, owned by one Mark Stone (no relation, unfortunately, for Bob wouldn't have minded a family discount). He wanted to put as much distance between 509 East Broadway and himself before he made the wide turn that would take him back east to home. So he continued a block or so past the Western Motor Company, when he realized with a start that his night's work was not yet done. For there in front of him was 604 West Broadway: The Democratic Party Headquarters of Lea County, New Mexico.

It was true that the Republicans had taken his money, his time, and his support only to sell him out. Bob supposed that that was why he was so angered at the Republican betrayal-- he expected more of them. You didn't expect your so-called friends to stab you in the back. But the Republicans in truth were only half the problem. It was the Clintonista Democrats who had brought the country to this state. And while it was true that Democrats could no more be blamed for stealing the rights, liberties and tax money of their fellow citizens than rattlesnakes could be blamed for biting (it was, after all, their declared mission in life), their windows deserved breaking nonetheless. Indeed, Bob reflected with a silent laugh that although he had killed many a rattlesnake in the desert around Hobbs he had not as yet killed a Democrat, although Democrats were an infinitely a greater threat to peace and the Republic. Well, there's a time and place for everything, Bob decided. Tonight, he would merely break their windows.

And as he stood contemplating the windows at 604 West Broadway, he noted to his satisfaction that they were nice big, expensive plate glass windows. It would cost the Democrats much more to replace these than it would the Republicans to fix their modest, old-fashioned window panes. This, Bob Stone thought, was more than fitting. But the breaking need a bit more preparation. Bigger rocks, perhaps. No, not bigger rocks, just more preparation. Bob fingered the automatic center punch in his work jacket pocket. Yeah, he decided, just the right instrument of destruction for these tempered-glass targets.

He went to the alley behind the building foraging for ammunition and found two new bricks pre-positioned there by what Bob Stone was now convinced was the hand of the Almighty. It could not have been by accident, of that he was certain. Bob pulled out his marker and wrote, lazy-dazy, winding the letters around the holes in the brick: "Second Amendment-- Shall Not Be Infringed."

Somewhat stealthier now, he checked the street before sidling up to the windows. To each he gave several preparatory hits with the automatic center punch. Spiderwebs of fractured glass appeared on each window. Then, checking the empty street one last time, he backed away from the windows and heaved the bricks one after the other with all the speed his overage pitching arm could muster. If the Republican window had sounded like an atomic bomb, these sounded like two hydrogen bombs, and Bob gave into his fear just long enough to run across the street. As the last shards of the windows were still falling, giving way to gravity and dropping with lesser explosions, Bob began to control his fear and slowed to a walk.

And so it was that he walked casually all the way home. As he passed one of the cross streets he noticed blue lights down toward East Broadway. He smiled, and walked just a bit faster. His wife stirred slightly when he eased himself back into bed, but Bob Stone had cured his angry insomnia and, happy now to be a criminal, he fell instantly asleep. Sleeping, he would later say to himself, the sleep of the just.

It all might have ended there had it not been for an editor at the local paper, the Hobbs News-Sun, who along with his college education had acquired a virulent liberal bias about things such as gun-control. Determined to show-case the "lawlessness" of gunowners, he assigned himself as the reporter on the story and also wrote the first of several (he thought stinging) editorials. The story was picked up by the state Associated Press, and eventually made its way to USA Today and the New York Times.

As if to prove that the Law of Unintended Consequences was alive and well, it was when the story went

national that strange things began to happen. In Marion County, Ohio, somebody who read the USA Today story decided that breaking the windows of Democrats and Republicans was a pretty good idea. So did all his buddies at the Whirlpool plant.

As a matter of fact, it was about a baker's-dozen Buckeyes who first decoyed the cops, then smashed every window in both party headquarters the next night. Some were broken with nicely inscribed smooth stones that, like little David, they had fished out of a stream. On each was written the entire text of the Second Amendment to the Constitution. "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." Windows too high, small or inconvenient to reach with stones were finished off with ball bearings fired from slingshots or baseball bats.

In lightning raids two nights later, the same crew smashed the windows of both party's' headquarters in three neighboring counties. It was bipartisan vandalism, and more news stories were generated. Fearing that the rock-throwers would come to his house, the chairman of the Marion County Republican Party resigned. When his Democrat counterpart did not, someone broke the windows in his house, too. One of the more thoughtful vandals taped the business card of a local glass company to his front door.

With "The Marion Incident", window-breaking on behalf of the Constitution began to spread. In about four weeks, 194 local headquarters of both parties were "ventilated" with rocks, bricks, concrete blocks, shotputs, lead weights, tire irons, antique civil war cannon balls and in the case of one Democratic party headquarters in Michigan, a twenty-pound brass jackass of unknown origin. Attached to, or written upon, each was the Second Amendment to the Constitution.

Similar missiles found glass targets at the homes of no fewer than 56 politicians of both parties who had been prominent supporters of gun-control.

Rewards were offered-- none was collected. Only in a few cases were the perpetrators caught, and most of those were teenage sons of well-known gun owners. In one case in Texas, the windows were broken publicly by a citizen who sought arrest for his civil disobedience. In a jury trial, he was quickly acquitted.

"The Window War" became nightly fodder for the television talking heads. And with more publicity came more broken windows. Commentators on the left condemned "vigilante justice" and "lawlessness" and called for political window-breaking to be classified as a "hate crime." Commentators on the right spoke against lawlessness more softly, pointing out that it was the Clintonistas who had made a business of flouting the rule of law (most recently in the case of Elian Gonzalez), and that destroying windows was probably a lesser crime than destroying the Constitution. And everyone agreed with MSNBC's "Hardball" Chris Matthews, a life-long Democrat, when he observed: "These are all gun-owners breaking the law. I suppose we should be grateful they're using rocks."

The polls sent the politicians mixed signals about how the public felt about The Window War. Initially overwhelmingly disapproving of such vandalism, the numbers began to shift as the "War" went on, the issues that had prompted the window-breaking became better known and nothing but windows were being harmed. There was a natural sympathy streak in many Americans for those who fought city hall.

Exactly one month after Bob Stone broke his first window at 509 East Broadway, copy-cat incidents were happening ten or twenty times a night with no end in sight. After two buckets, one containing rocks and the other containing a mixture of tar and feathers, were delivered to the Mississippi home of Senator Trent Lott, the Majority Leader decided, (with the concurrence of "Dubya"), that the political price of Republican gun-control had grown too high. It wasn't the implied threat that got to Lott so much as the fact that the card which accompanied the buckets was signed by some of his campaign contributors, one of whom was a distant relative. With the help of several relieved Democrats, Lott killed the bill.

With the Window War threatening to muddy up his campaign for President, Candidate "Dubya" called Larry Pratt of Gun Owners of America (it was widely recognized that the "rockers" were not listening to the National Rifle Association, which they regarded as a sell-out organization) and quietly promised that if he was elected he would sign a bill that rolled back all of the Clinton-era gun control laws if Pratt could just guarantee that no more windows would be broken. Since the window-breakers weren't under his control either, Pratt said he couldn't promise anything, but he would try.

Three days after Senator Lott killed the bill, the last "shot" was fired in the Window War by twenty members of a Veterans of Foreign Wars post in New York who snuck up on the home of the Empire State's virulently anti-gun Attorney General while he was away and peppered it with Revolutionary War musket balls fired from Gamo "Wrist-Rocket" slingshots. Police responding to the alarm found a big folding sign-board blocking the driveway. It read: "Sue this!"

Across the country, the volunteer soldiers of The Window War read the papers, talked among themselves, and decided to await further developments with a truce. The only Americans who were sad to see the rocks stop flying were the owners of the nation's glass companies.

The howling of Clinton, Gore, Schumer, Feinstein and Company sounded like a banshee chorus but it could not resurrect the bill. Nor could they make it an effective campaign issue against Bush--he had condemned the vandalism in the strongest terms. After George "Dubya" Bush was elected President, and the Republicans retained control of the Congress, the tide of gun control receded. It wasn't that Dubya and his GOP colleagues had "discovered" any principles, they were simply smart enough to recognize that that particular political skunk was best left in the bucket. The reminder that political decisions sometimes have personal consequences acted like a tonic on Republicans and Democrats alike.

The Window War was won, and to the astonishment of many gun owners, no one had been killed. It had long been thought that bloodshed would be required to make the liberals understand that God-given rights are not compromisable. All it had taken was a few hundred rocks and other missiles and one brass jackass.

Many men and women would later claim to have been window-breakers, ten times as many as there probably were. But back in Hobbs, no one ever knew who broke the first window in the gun-control war, and that was just fine with Bob Stone. The only person he ever told was his wife, Amy. Together, they decided to keep Bob's foray into petty crime just between themselves. Neither of them was sure just how they could explain their Daddy's night of window-breaking to the kids.

Author's Postscript: The story above is one possible future for this country. There are others far worse. As J.R. Nyquist recently wrote of the Elian Gonzalez federal kidnapping:

"Specific events, regardless of their actual importance to history, sometimes capture the human imagination. In doing this, they become rallying points for masses of people. They become pivotal to political careers. Such events can bring about the collapse of governments or determine the outcome of elections....Except for clueless and apathetic persons, America has been split into two hostile ideological camps. One is the anti-communist or anti-statist camp, which looks to traditional moral values, the Constitution, a strong family unit and the free market. The other camp is socialist or "progressive" in its outlook, globalist and environmentalist in its policies."

There is no reconciling the two futures these camps represent. One or the other will win in the end. The war up to now has been waged in the political and social arena. The time is fast approaching when this political and social "war" will spill over into armed conflict-- real civil war. If it does, it will happen mostly because everyone thinks it impossible. For sixty years, the liberals have used our respect for the law against us. Each time they moved the line of law to further their agenda, breaking off a bit of the Constitution, we, as law-abiding citizens have backed up grumbling but complying. And why should they stop pushing us back from our God-given liberties? We've never pushed back to stop them. We have been TOO law-abiding.

Remember one thing: Adolf Hitler was elected, and the Nazis passed laws justifying every horrible act they later committed. In such a country, law-breaking is not a crime but a virtue. Before we get too far down that road, perhaps a little window-breaking is in order. Waiting too late to oppose tyranny has always led to bloodshed. Let us avoid that if we can. But history holds such windows of opportunity open only so long, and ours is rapidly closing. Perhaps by breaking the window now, we can escape the horrible alternative. And if in the unlikely event my modest story should become fact, somewhere The Sons of Liberty will be smiling.